

TESTIMONY OF DAVID J. WASKOWICZ
BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MARCH 9, 2009

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, my name is David J. Waskowicz. I reside at 169 Northfield Rd. Meriden, CT. I am a product of the Connecticut apprentice system and a licensed journeyman sprinkler fitter. I also serve on Sprinkler Fitters Local 676 Joint Apprentice Committee. We currently have 55 apprentices registered with the Connecticut Department of Labor.

I want to address House Bill number 6370, An Act Concerning a Middle College System. I understand that the State of Connecticut is facing difficult financial times as is the rest of the country. Many of our residents are facing the same troubled times. The state is looking at a huge deficit and trying to find ways to overcome some of the red ink. Doubling the fees for apprentice registration and for the sponsors of these apprentices is the suggestion of some legislators to raise revenue. Under this new legislation the oversight of apprenticeship would be taken from the Department of Labor and assigned this Middle College System.

The Governor has stated there would not be an increase in tuition for the state colleges and universities. Apprenticeship is a form of a secondary education. The Connecticut Department of Labor refers to apprenticeship as the "OTHER FOUR YEAR DEGREE". I am not opposed to some increase of these fees for apprentices and sponsors but I am opposed to the monies not being used to maintain the department that has been charged with overseeing the operation. That department is the Connecticut Department of Labor and its division, the Office of Apprentice Training. It is my opinion that to double the amount would be too harsh given the current economy. Currently the sponsor is charged an annual fee of \$30 and the apprentice's cost is \$25.

To have the money go into that big black hole that people refer to as the general fund would be casting a death sentence to the Office of Apprenticeship Training. This fee was implemented a few years back to address another shortfall in the state's budget and to restore the Department of Labor's staff. Whether or not you decide to raise the fees by any amount, you should have the monies remain with the department that is best suited to do the job they have been entrusted with. Do not create another agency or assign duties to an agency not as well equipped to handle the oversight of apprenticeship.

In closing, I ask that you choose to leave apprenticeship in the hands of the Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship Training. The working men and women learning a trade would best be served by that decision. Do not take away that department's lifeline by sending the money into the general fund.

Thank you,

David J. Waskowicz